

REMARKS

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and in view of the reasons that follow.

Claims 8-12 and 18-24 stand objected to for minor informalities. Claims 18, 22 and 23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,229,976 to Kimura. Claims 3 and 4 are allowed and claims 8-12, 19 and 20 contain allowable subject matter. Claims 21 and 24 stand objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

By this amendment, claims 18, 22 and 23 have been canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. Therefore, any outstanding objections and/or rejections with respect to these claims have been rendered moot. Claim 8 has been amended to address the informalities noted by the Examiner on page 2 of the Office Action. Applicant respectfully submits that claim 8, as amended, and claims dependent therefrom, are in proper form. Withdrawal of the objection to the claims is respectfully requested. Claim 19 has been rewritten in independent form and claims 21 and 24 have been amended to update their dependence. Claims 3, 4, 9-12 and 20 remain unchanged in the application.

This amendment adds, changes and/or deletes claims in this application. A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application, irrespective of whether the claim(s) remain under examination in the application, is presented, with an appropriate defined status identifier. After amending the claims as set forth above, claims 3, 4, 8-12, 19-21 and 24 are now pending in this application for consideration.

THE CLAIMS DISTINGUISH OVER THE CITED REFERENCE

Claims 18, 22 and 23 stand rejected as being anticipated by Kimura. Applicant gratefully acknowledges the Office Action's indication that claims 3 and 4 are allowed, and claims 8-12, 19-21 and 24 contain allowable subject matter. Although Applicant respectfully submits that the invention which is the subject matter of the rejected claims may be patentable over the cited reference, Applicant at this time intends to pursue patent protection for the allowable subject matter recited in the claims identified above.

As such, rejected claims 18, 22 and 23 have been canceled. Claim 19 has been rewritten in independent form to include all of the features of base claim 8 and the remainder of the claims remain unchanged or have been amended to depend directly or indirectly from independent claim 8. The cancellation of claims 18, 22 and 23 is not meant to concede to the appropriateness of the rejections of these claims, but merely to expedite prosecution of the patent application. Further remarks regarding the asserted relationship between any of the claims and the cited reference are not necessary in view of their allowability. Applicant's silence as to the Office Action's comments is not indicative of being in acquiescence to the stated grounds of rejection.

Applicant believes that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check or credit card payment form being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Respectfully submitted,

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